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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000505

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SUBJECT: AEP 15 MEETING WITH AU PEACE AND SECURITY  
COMMISSIONER LAMAMRA

Classified By: Ambassador Mark M. Boulware for reasons 1.5 (b and d)

¶1. (C) AU Peace and Security Commissioner Lamamra asked UN Resident Coordinator Maria Ribeiro to invite representatives of the international community to meet with him on September 15 prior to his meeting with various Mauritanian figures. Commissioner Lamamra noted that he had asked to meet to discuss his mission and to seek guidance and insight in carrying out his responsibilities. He expressed pleasure with the strong unity demonstrated by the international community, noting that clear principles were at stake. At the same time he noted that the international community was extending a hand of friendship to Mauritania in the hope that a solution to the crisis could be found that we could all support. He recalled the AU's statements reminding the junta of its engagements and calling for it to refrain from actions that would complicate a solution. Declining to define such "complications," he said that obviously reinforcing the irreversibility of the coup would be an example. Lamamra said he had requested and expected to meet with President Abdallahi, General Aziz, the Presidents of the National Assembly and the Senate, the President of the Economic and Social Commission, Opposition Leader Ould Daddah, and former President Vall. Lamamra said that he had managed to arrange on his own to meet Vall and Ould Daddah the previous evening, characterizing Vall's stance as closest to the AU position and Ould Daddah's as focusing on demands for an election timetable and a guarantee on junta non-participation and non-interference.

¶2. (C) Lamamra noted that on September 22 in New York he would be called upon to report back to member states on progress with Mauritania and that if after "47 days and 3 visits" it would not be pleasant to report that the AU's demand for Abdallahi's liberation had not been met. Lamamra opined that considering the Zimbabwean settlement, there was no reason that a solution to Mauritania could not be reached and that there was no reason to wait to take decisions later that could be taken now. He noted the irony of Mauritania's position as the first and only African country to deposit instruments of ratification to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

¶3. (C) In general remarks to Lamamra, Spanish Ambassador Alejandro Polanco applauded the solidarity of the international community in affirming democratic principles but noted that arriving at a solution would require compromise on both sides to get a settlement that left "neither victor nor vanquished." Reiterating the strong French position, Ambassador Vandepoorter said the 2007 elections must be respected and Ould Daddah's RFD party must

be reminded what the D stands for (Democracy). He said that Abdallahi's supporters in the FNDD also needed to appreciate that the political crisis in the country was larger than the just the coup d'etat. EU Commission representative Geza Stammer underscored the importance of the release of the President and noted that the EU's letter requesting Article 96 consultations would be going out very soon. If representatives of the junta show up at that meeting and President Abdallahi has not been freed, the meeting would likely be a very short one.

¶4. (C) World Bank Resident Representative Francois Rantrua lamented that Mauritanian actors were taking positions without realizing the potentially dangerous consequences those positions entailed. He noted that the economic situation could go very bad, very quickly, with disastrous results for the country. Moreover, he said under the current circumstances we did not even have the means to adequately monitor what was happening in the economy. Senegalese Ambassador Mahmoudou Cheikh Kane praised international solidarity on Mauritania and said that it was welcome and natural for Mauritania's friends and neighbors to become engaged but all should recall that this is a complex and fragile society. Acknowledging that democratic principles required Abdallahi to be released but, speaking personally, he wondered if the junta feared a replay of the Waghef release which was followed by "agitation."

¶5. (C) Tunisian Ambassador Abderrahmane Belhadj Ali said that the situation was deteriorating from economic, social and governance perspectives alike. Noting that this was the

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type of atmosphere that terrorists could use to their advantage, he said that he feared that the situation could slip beyond the control of authorities. He said that it was imperative that the junta understand that a fait accompli would not be accepted. He urged Commissioner Lamamra to consider engaging experienced and credible Mauritanian elder statesmen to help mediate.

¶6. (C) Ambassador Boulware joined others in applauding international solidarity but strongly associated himself with the need for the junta to grasp the urgency of the situation. Given the obvious risks of the situation spinning out of control, the Ambassador noted that it was all the more imperative not to lose time working on a roadmap that would be a dead letter for the international community. The liberation and restoration of the President and the Prime Minister were essential to regaining the legitimacy which would permit moving forward from a constitutional point of departure.

¶7. (C) Comment: Although, the group seemed genuinely impressed with the degree to which the international community and its various institutions had come together on the issue, national nuances were evident. Nonetheless, France, the EU Commission and the US all articulated strong positions in favor of liberating the President and restoring constitutional order. Although Lamamra played his cards close, it is apparent that he believes that it is past time for the junta to begin engaging seriously or risk even greater isolation by an increasingly impatient international community.

Boulware